

SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS



The Minimatik neomatik champagner 1st edition.

Nomos Glashütte celebrates its groundbreaking new automatic movement with 10 new watches.

by Michael Disher

Nomos Glashütte was founded in 1990, and though the watches have always been popular, in recent years, the brand has been on fire. Need proof? Since 2011, Nomos has doubled both its turnover and its headcount, the latter increasing from about 100 to more than 200. In 2014, a generally tough year for the watch industry, Nomos grew by 30 percent, and Nomos CEO Uwe Ahrendt was voted Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year. Today, Nomos is the largest producer of mechanical watches in Germany. Some say that young people are not buying new, high-quality mechanical watches. Nomos did not get the memo.

Nomos is bucking the trend in other ways as well. At Baselworld this year, they launched an all-new, fully in-house automatic movement, and now they're rolling it out in 10 new watches — a complete collection, all at once. You don't have to wait a few years as the brand releases occasional line extensions to get just the watch that you want. This is like five years of launches rolled into one, and there's something for everyone.

The new collection is called neomatik, with a small "n," and this initial batch is called the 1st edition (1st, not first). The 1st edition consists of five favorite Nomos models, each available in two versions, for a total of 10 watches. The 1st edition designation is how Nomos is celebrating its recently launched DUW 3001 automatic caliber. By the way, DUW is an acronym for Nomos Glashütte "Deutsche Uhrenwerke," which means German watch-movement manufacturer. This designation underscores the company's capabilities for producing movements in-house.

According to Nomos, only the watches produced in 2015 belong to the 1st edition. When they're done making these, the company will take a short break from neomatik and will continue with new and different neomatik watches for the Baselworld show in Spring 2016. That makes the 1st edition special — limited-production pieces, and each one is engraved "neomatik 1st edition" on the caseback.

Let's start with the new movement. It is, after all, the heart of the story, and it's special for several reasons. To start, it's really thin for a serially manufactured full-rotor automatic. To be precise, it's only 3.2mm in height. By way of comparison, ETA's cal. 2824-2 is 4.6mm thick, and the cal. 2892-A2, which

is generally considered thin, comes in at 3.6mm. The new Nomos caliber is thinner than the competition because it's a modern, new-from-the-ground-up design, so it's the product of modern research and production techniques. That's not to say it's built by robots — there's still plenty of handwork by skilled watchmakers involved. Finally, the new movement is an excellent timekeeper.

Nomos says that its modern R&D efforts resulted in space-saving tolerances that reduce by half those used by others, while also improving precision and efficiency. So the movement is not only thinner, it's more reliable and it keeps excellent time. All of this is the result of three years of R&D, which is on top of the seven years spent developing the in-house Nomos Swing System escapement found in the cal. DUW 3001.

So how did Nomos make the movement so thin while maintaining excellent timekeeping? As explained by Theodor Prenzel, the company's 30-year-old deputy head of R&D, the key was to place almost all of the parts between the baseplate and the three-quarter plate. That meant the ratchet wheel had to be 50-percent flatter than usual, because the space between the baseplate and the three-quarter plate is only 1mm high. Nomos eschewed modular construction, designing an integrated caliber that is assembled with a combination of modern production and assembly techniques, and skilled handcraft.

To compensate for the thinner mainspring, which naturally produces less energy, lots of R&D went into the wheel-train design, resulting in a 10-percent increase in efficiency. The DUW 3001 is up to 94.2-percent efficient, compared with about 80 percent for most calibers. This may not sound like much, but in engineering terms, it's a significant achievement.

Of course, the cal. DUW 3001 also incorporates several traditional Glashütte elements, including a three-quarter plate, heat-blued screws and Glashütte ribbing. It also features the exclusive Nomos in-house Swing System, consisting of the balance wheel, balance spring, escape wheel and pallet. Nomos also uses a balance bridge that is secured at both ends, as opposed to the usual balance cock, which is mounted only at one end. This allows the escapement to be stably positioned in the movement, which improves both efficiency and accuracy.

This image: Caliber DUW 3001 incorporates several traditional Glashütte elements, including a three-quarter plate, heat-blued screws, and Glashütte ribbing.



Another system Prenzel developed uses a special component called a “Doppelklinkenrad” or “double-click wheel”, which prevents the rotor from winding the mainspring once it reaches full wind. This development in turn required Nomos to create some custom tools to assemble the new device.

Now that we know what’s inside, let’s look at some of the new watches. The neomatik 1st edition includes new models in the popular Tangente, Orion, Ludwig and Metro lines, as well as in the newly launched Minimatik. There are two new versions of each watch: one with cyan-blue accents on a silver-plated white dial, and the other with neon-orange accents on a champagne dial. Nomos logically calls the latter versions “neomatik champagner”. We’ll look at two models, the Tangente and the Minimatik.

The Tangente neomatik 1st edition retains its classic 35mm diameter, and thanks to the ultra-thin cal. DUW 3001 inside, the case measures only 6.9mm in height, which is quite slender for an automatic full-rotor watch. The extremely narrow bezel means the watch looks and wears larger than its measurements might suggest. Like all of the new models, the caseback is engraved “neomatik 1st edition”.

Twin sapphire crystals offer expansive views of the dial and movement. The regular versions feature a white silver-plated dial with subtle yet distinctive cyan-blue numerals above each five-minute marker. The strap is hand-stitched genuine Horween shell-cordovan leather in black, which utilizes rembouré construction, in which the top or outer leather layer is wrapped around the sides of the strap, giving it a clean, finished look. A unique Nomos pin buckle, previously available only on gold watches, completes the package.

The “champagner” version retains the same characteristics, save the dial and strap. The dial is a pale-gold or champagne color with a neon-orange small-seconds hand and matching numerals on the

small-seconds track. The matching-color strap is vegetable-tanned natural leather.

At first blush, the Minimatik neomatik 1st edition looks very much like the Minimatik that debuted at Baselworld earlier this year, but there are some subtle differences. Of course the caseback bears the “neomatik 1st edition” engraving, and on the dial, the word “Automatik” has been replaced with “neomatik”. On the version with the white silver-plated dial, the dots on the minute track that were red on the original version are now cyan blue. On the champagner model’s dial, the “neomatik” text, the minute-track dots, the sub-seconds hand and the twin circles that outline the small-seconds display are all neon orange. The Minimatik case measures 35.5mm in diameter and 8.86mm in height.

Beyond their distinctive signature looks, Nomos watches are well known for their extremely reasonable prices. The Tangente neomatik 1st edition retails at USD3,460, and the Tangente neomatik champagner 1st edition costs USD3,580. The Minimatik 1st edition retails for USD3,680, and the Minimatik champagner 1st edition at USD3,800. Needless to say, these watches represent outstanding value.

Finally, if all this has not convinced you of the inherent goodness at Nomos, we’ll leave you with this. Nomos makes practically everything it needs in-house. When parts or materials have to be brought in, the company ensures both that the parts are the best quality, and that the suppliers work to appropriate standards. The Nomos Metro watch won the Green Product Award for its quality design and technical innovation, and the brand was recognized as an Ecoprofit company for its sustainable production practices and its exemplary environmental-protection program. The brand also supports the Nobel Peace Prize-winning organization Doctors Without Borders.

Like we said, success breeds success. ★



Clockwise from top: A watchmaker carefully affixing the small seconds hand on a Minimatik neomatik champagner 1st edition watch dial; the Minimatik neomatik 1st edition; and the caseback of the Minimatik neomatik champagner 1st edition.

